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Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 242722

FOR AMBASSADOR BUNKER

FOLLOWING REPEAT AMMAN 6546 SENT SECSTATE INFO ABU DHABI BEIRUT CAIRO DAMASCUS JIDDA TEL AVIV KUWAIT RABAT TUNIS TRIPOLI JERUSALEM ALGIERS GENEVA DATED NOV 3.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 6546

DEPT PASS SECRETARY'S PARTY
BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD
GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, JO, XO
SUBJ: LOCAL REACTIONS TO RABAT SUMMIT DECISIONS

1. SUMMARY: BASED ON LIMITED EMBASSY SAMPLE OF LOCAL CONTACTS, MOST JORDANIANS APPEAR RELIEVED OVER OUTCOME OF RABAT SUMMIT. THEY GREET RABAT AS WATERSHED, WITH PLO, NOT JORDAN, HENCEFORTH RESPONSIBLE FOR FRUSTRATING WEST BANK PROBLEM. INITIAL GOJ DISAPPOINTMENT AT RABAT "SELL-OUT" SUCCEEDED BY AT LEAST LIP SERVICE OFFICIAL SUPPORT FOR RECOGNIZING PLO. EAST BANKERS RELIEVED THAT JORDAN HAS WASHED HANDS OF WEST BANK; MORE EXTREME EAST BANKERS INCLUDING SOME ARMY INCLINED TO FORCE PALESTINIANS CONFIDENTIAL

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TO CHOOSE ON QUESTION OF JORDANIAN OR PALESTINIAN CITIZENSHIP

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BUT KING HAS PUT BRAKES ON HARD-LINE SENTIMENTS. MOST PALEST-
INIANS PREOCCUPIED WITH CITIZENSHIP QUESTIONS BUT FEW SEEM INTER-
ESTED IN OPTING TO RETURN TO WEST BANK AT THIS TIME. SOME UNHA-
PPINESS THAT KING DID NOT CONSULT PARLIAMENT BEFORE GIVING IN TO
PLO. ALSO SKEPTICISM THAT $300 MILLION AID WILL ALL GO TO MIL-
ITARY OR INTO POCKETS OF RICH. MOST JORDANIANS THINK U.S. HAD
ALREADY TILTED IN FAVOR OF PLO ROLE IN NEGOTIATIONS AND NOW SEE
ISRAEL AS OBLIGED TO NEGOTIATE WITH PLO OR RISK WAR WITH ALL
ARABS. END SUMMARY.

2. OFFICIAL REACTION: INITIAL JORDANIAN OFFICIAL REACTION TO RABAT
DECISION WAS EXTREME DISAPPOINTMENT THAT JORDAN RECEIVED NO SUPP-
ORT FROM ARAB STATES ON WEST BANK ISSUE. GOJ OFFICIALDOM AND KING
HAVE NOW PUT "BEST FACE" ON FAIT ACCOMPLI: BANNERS STRUNG ALONG
AMMAN STREETS STILL WELCOME BACK HUSSEIN "FROM HIS JORDANIAN
FAMILY," AND GOJ MOUTHPIECES (SUCH AS PALACE CHIEF BAHJAT TALH-
OUNI) IN NEWSPAPER INTERVIEWS PRAISE PERSPICACITY OF KING'S
DECISION. CURRENT GOJ STRESS IS ON MAGNANIMITY TOWARD PALESTINIAN
RESIDENTS, AS CHARACTERIZED BY KING'S OCTOBER 30 SPEECH AND ON
SUPPRESSING PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF ANY ANTI-PALESTINIAN SENTIMENTS.
FOR EXAMPLE, GOJ CONFISCATED COPIES OF WEEKLY AL-LIWA
CONTAINING ANTI-PALESTINIAN EDITORIAL AND AT CROWN PRINCE'S ORDER
CANCELLED A LARGE RECEPTION WHICH EAST BANKERS WERE PLANNING UPON
KING'S RETURN.

3. EAST BANK "JORDANIAN" RESPONSE: EAST BANKERS EXPRESS VIRTUALLY
UNIVERSAL SATISFACTION AT RABAT DECISION, WHICH MOST RESIDENTS
INTERPRET AS JORDAN TURNING OVER ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR
WEST BANK TO PLO. PREVAILING OPINION IS THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR
PALESTINE HAS FINALLY BEEN PUT WHERE IT BELONGS, I.E. WITH THE
PALESTINIANS FOR WHICH, LIKE IT OR NOT, PLO APPEARS ONLY VIABLE
REPRESENTATIVE. THEY SEE JORDAN RELIEVED OF TERRIBLE BURDEN AND
DO NOT GENERALLY CONSIDER SHORT-TERM ADVERSE IMPLICATIONS FOR
MIDEAST PEACE. HOWEVER, SOME YOUNGER, WESTERN-ORIENTED JORDANIANS
REGRET KING'S NOT CONSULTING "THE PEOPLE" VIA CONVENING PARLIA-
MENT BEFORE OR AFTER CEDING WEST BANK. HARDLINE ARMY AND TRIBAL
TYPES CAN BARELY RESTRAIN GLEE AT BEING RID OF WEST BANK AND, BY
IMPLICATION, LOCAL PALESTINIANS; UNDERTONE IS ALSO PRESENT THAT
"NOW THE KING HAD BETTER SHAPE UP" RE PURGING DIWAN OF NON-EAST
BANKERS. HARD-LINERS DISMAYED BY KING'S SUGGESTION IN SPEECH THAT
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SUBSIDIES TO WEST BANK WILL CONTINUE AND RESENT FACT THAT "JORD-
ANIANS" ONLY MENTIONED BRIEFLY IN SPEECH; "HOW CAN THE KING CITE
HIS PALESTINIAN BROTHERS AND HIS SAUDI FOREFATHERS WITHOUT
MENTIONING HIS OWN PEOPLE?"

4. PALESTINIAN REACTION: LOCAL PALESTINIANS PREOCCUPIED BY FEAR
OF EAST BANK BACKLASH, ALTHOUGH KING'S SPEECH WENT FAR TOWARD
CALMING SUSPICIIONS. APPREHENSION PREVALENT PARTICULARLY AMONG

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THE APPROX 200,000 CAMPDWELLERS WHO TRADITIONALLY PRONE TO OVER-
REACTIONS. RUMORS CURRENTLY CIRCULATING THERE OF IMMINENT CLOSURE
OF CAMPS, ALTHOUGH ASSUMPTION IS THAT INHABITANTS WOULD HAVE TO
FIND HOUSING IN JORDAN RATHER THAN FORCIBLE EVICTION TO WEST BANK.
LAND AND RENT PRICES EXPECTED TO RISE, PARCITULARLY SINCE ASSUM-
PTION BY PALESTINIANS IS THAT WHATEVER REMAINS OF $300 MILLION
ANNUAL SUBSIDY WILL STRAIN ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY OF JORDANIAN
ECONOMY. YOUNG HOTHEAD CAMP DWELLERS AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
ELATED BY PLO REPRESENTATION, BUT POLITICALLY SOPHISTICATED
PALESTINIANS, SUCH AS UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS, ARE CONCERNED BY
PRACTICAL RAMIFICATIONS. EVEN SOPHISTICATED PALESTINIANS WHO
READILY ADMIT TO DESPISING KING HUSSEIN AT LEAST SAW HIM AS SOLE
CHANCE TO RECOVER WEST BANK. THESE SOPHISTICATED PALESTINIANS,
PARTICULARLY THOSE WITH PROPERTY IN FORMER WEST BANK ARE ONLY
PUBLIC OPINION GROUP SHARING TOP LEVEL OFFICIAL GLOOM OVER
BREAKDOWN IN NEGOTIATIONS PROSPECTS OVER WEST BANK. INFORMAL POLL
BY UNIVERSITY OF JORDAN PROFESSOR OF 21 PALESTINIAN CONTACTS IN
ITELLIGENTSIA FOUND NOT ONE PRESENTLY WILLING TO RETURN TO A
WEST BANK UNDER PLO RULE, BUT THAT ALL OBJECTED TO POSSIBILITY
OF BEING FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN JORDANIAN AND PALESTINIAN NAT-
IONALITY AT THIS TIME. SOME EDUCATED PALESTINIANS OBJECT TO FACT
THAT YASIR ARAFAT HAS BEEN DECREED LEADER OF THEIR PEOPLE WITH-
OUT THIS HAVING BEEN PUT TO SOME SORT OF POLL (PRESUMABLY TO HAVE
BEEN HELD IN ALL ARAB COUNTRIES).

5. IN ABSENCE REAL OPTION TO RETURN, IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE
WHAT PERCENTAGE OF 800,000 PALESTINIANS MIGHT RETURN TO FUTURE
WEST BANK STATE. AS USUAL, PALESTINIANS WILL ADOPT WATCH-AND-
WAIT ATTITUDE. (INDEED, SOME PROPSEROUS LOCAL PALESTINIANS
WOULD HEAD EAST SHOULD "1970 THUGS" POUR INTO AREA).

6. REACTION TO U.S.: OFFICIAL JORDANIANS ARE DISAPPOINTED WITH
RABAT DECISION AND SOME BLAME US FOR NOT PREVENTING IT. IN FACT,
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RUMORS ARE RIFE THAT U.S. HAD MADE DECISION TO TILT TOWARDS PLO
PRIOR TO RABAT AND PRESIDENT FORD'S OCT 28 STATEMENT, IS ADDUCED
AS EVIDENCE. STORY CIRCULATING, ORIGINATING WITH MEMBER OF OFF-
ICIAL DELEGATION, THAT ALGERIANS SAID KISSINGER TOLD BOUMEDIENNE
THAT USG WOULD SUPPORT A PLO ROLE IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL IF
THAT WAS ARAB DECISION. IN ESSENCE, GENERAL VIEW IS THAT DECIS-
IVE WATERSHED HAS OCCURRED IN MIDEAST WITH PLO REPLACING JORDAN
ON WEST BANK. MOST JORDANIANS IGNORE SHORT-TERM TACTICAL CONSIDER-
ATIONS AND ISRAELI DOMESTIC POLITICAL FACTORS. CONVICTION EXISTS
AMONG SURPRISINGLY LARGE SEGMENT OF PALESTINIANS AND EAST
BANKERS THAT ISRAELI THREATS NEVER TO NEGOTIATE WITH PLO ARE SO
MUCH HOT AIR, AND THAT US PRESSURE WILL INEVITABLY INDUCE THEM
TO TALK.

7. COMMENT: IN GENERAL GOJ HAS BEEN EFFECTIVE, CHIEFLY THROUGH

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KING'S SPEECH, IN DEFUSING POTENTIALLY SERIOUS PUBLIC REACTION TO CONFUSING DOMESTIC IMPLICATIONS OF RABAT SUMMIT. WE WOULD CAUTION AGAINST EXAGGERATING POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF LOCAL REACTION GIVEN 1) LIMITED BASE OF EMBASSY SAMPLE: 2) FACT THAT KING GENERALLY LEADS RATHER THAN FOLLOWS PUBLIC OPINION, AND 3) FACT THAT OPINIONS ENDORSING PLO IN FACT NOW ENCOURAGED BY GOJ POLICY SWITCH. NEVERTHELESS, WE ARE SURPRISED WITH NEAR-UNANIMITY OF ACCLAIM FOR JORDANIAN ABANDONMENT OF WEST BANK ROLE AND RELIEF THAT PLO NOW HAS THE PROBLEM. HOWEVER PRELIMINARY AND SUPERFICIAL, THIS REACTION, IT SHOULD LIMIT THE GOJ'S MANEUVERABILITY IN MIDEAST NEGOTIATIONS IN COMING MONTHS. WE ALSO FIND SOME DISENCHANTMENT WITH U.S. FOLLOWING RABAT SUMMIT, DESPITE WIDESPREAD PUBLICITY OVER U.S. SUPPORT FOR JORDANIAN NEGOTIATING ROLE. WHILE THERE IS NO ARTICULATED ANTI-U.S. CAMPAIGN, FEELING IS THAT SUMMIT HAS TAKEN WIND OUT OF SAILS OF U.S. MIDEAST DIPLOMACY AND PERIOD OF ADJUSTMENT TO NEW SITUATION IS REQUIRED. PICKERING UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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